

FIRST SELECTMAN UNVEILS PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013-2014

Herbst: "The budget that I present to you for fiscal year 2013-2014 maintains our superb school system, takes aggressive steps to increase funding for public safety, continues our efforts to address our infrastructure and for the fourth consecutive year, vigorously increases funding for the Town's pension fund, all while keeping the tax rate at a modest and predictable level."

February 11, 2013 - First Selectman Timothy M. Herbst on Monday proposed his fourth budget for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. The First Selectman noted that external factors at the federal and state level drove his decision in developing a budget for the 2013-2014. Specifically, the first selectman noted increases in the payroll tax at the federal level, along with tax increases at the state level, required the local budget to be as austere as possible. "With all of these external factors to consider, I am guided by one premise. There are core services we must provide and improve, but we must measure the delivery of these services with that which our residents can afford to sustain." Herbst went on to advise the Board of Finance that this year, the Town made aggressive investments in public safety, infrastructure and the Town's pension fund.

Herbst is proposing a total town budget of \$151,947,741, reducing departmental requests by \$5,448,307. Herbst indicated that the low mill rate increase is followed by last year, when most residents received a decrease in their residential property taxes. "After 91% of our residents saw a residential property tax decrease last year, the small increase in the mill rate this year continues to stabilize the tax rate, is in line with the rate of inflation in Fairfield County and commensurate with the four budgets I have proposed." Herbst commended recent efforts between the Town and the Board of Education to develop system efficiencies and specifically noted that the Town and the Board of Education were developing a plan for the two entities to join forces and develop a self-insurance model for the Town, at an estimated savings of almost \$2 million dollars. The First Selectman noted that the recent Gibson Report noted savings in the area of health insurance and this affirmative step by the Town and the Board of Education was the first in a series of measures designed to achieve system efficiencies and cost savings. Besides proposing a 2.74% increase in the Board of Education budget, Herbst said in his transmittal letter to the Board of Finance that one of the biggest drivers in the budget was costs incurred long ago that needed to be addressed.

He specifically referenced the pension fund and the Town's debt service. "This year, debt service increased 8.6%, a total increase of \$973,234. While many of us were not decision makers at the time the Town elected to borrow more than 100 million dollars in a five year period for capital projects, we are now the decision makers who must now develop a plan to pay the bill. These are financial obligations we cannot ignore." The First Selectman went on to note that for the fourth consecutive year, the Town was following the recommendations of actuaries in addressing the Town's pension shortfall. "Short term, we have aggressively increased annual funding in our operating budget to meet our pension obligations. Since 2009, we have increased our annual contributions \$2,025,000. In my proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-2014, the annual contributions

to our pension fund will be \$5,176,000. For the first time in at least the last twenty years, we have finally reached the actuarial level of recommended funding for our Town pension plan.” The First Selectman noted that the increased pension funding was critical to maintain the Town’s long term financial health. “The bond rating agencies have been clear with us that the pension fund needs to be a priority and we have made it one,” Herbst said. “One of the reasons why we have been able to maintain our bond rating and our overall financial health is because we have demonstrated by our actions that we are serious about dealing with this problem rather than kicking the can.” The First Selectman also indicated that other Town priorities were receiving top attention.

The area of public safety also saw an increase and for good reason. In his transmittal letter to the Board of Finance, the First Selectman indicated that he was making the Trumbull Police Department and the Trumbull Emergency Medical Service a top priority. The First Selectman indicated that the tragedies at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012 served as a signal for all communities to provide emergency personnel and first responders with the resources they need. “Nothing is more sacrosanct than the safety of our children,” stated First Selectman Herbst. “In this budget, I am recommending the hiring of 2 additional police officers that will allow for greater police presence at our schools. I am also recommending a robust investment in the training of our police officers. If our police officers are ever called upon to respond to an active shooter at any town building, school or facility, they must have continuous training and professional development to make sure they are more than ready to deal with any situation that is put before them. I am also supporting the replacement of critical life-saving equipment and vehicles.” The First Selectman also indicated that his budget embraces the reforms recommended for the Trumbull Emergency Medical Service, as evidenced by the recent Holdsworth Report. “My proposed budget embraces and implements the recommendations contained in the Holdsworth Report, with the express intent of reforming and improving the Trumbull Emergency Medical Service (TEMS). With the hiring of a qualified chief of the service and a renewed focus on improved call response, TEMS will become a self-sustaining agency that generates enough revenue to adequately run itself and properly protect the public at large.”

The First Selectman’s proposed budget will now be reviewed by the Trumbull Board of Finance.